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ABSTRACT

This history of the GI Bill of Rights, enacted in 1944, describes how its provisions affected 16 million veterans. The legislative history of the Bill reflects how support and criticism grew from the various political views in Congress and the nation during and immediately after World War II. Through the GI Bill, 7.8 million veterans received education benefits and 8.5 received unemployment assistance. The Bill also provided access to low interest mortgages and thus helped spur the growth of suburbs. The growth of the American middle class was stimulated by the economic growth related to the Second World War, and by the education and housing provisions of the GI Bill. In 1942, 213,000 college degrees were conferred and in 1951, 454,000. In less than a decade, the number of graduates more than doubled and the number of new two- and four-year colleges increased by 10 percent. The GI Bill impacted higher education in other ways, including greater student diversity and more social integration. The impacts of the initial GI Bill and its successors extended beyond educational access and into modern American society. (Individual chapters contain references.) (JLS)

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